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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002658

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SUBJECT: IRAQI EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING, AUGUST 3

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Iraqi Executive Steering Committee (I-ESC) held a shortened session August 3 with a number of key members absent. The Prime Minister asked for follow-up on a number of issues, including the renovation of ministry buildings in Baghdad, coordination of the Baghdad Provincial Council (BPC) with the Baghdad Operations Center (BOC) and the Fardh al-Qanoon (FAQ) media plan. The PM adjourned the session early in order to welcome the Iraqi national soccer team home from their Asian Cup victory. End summary.

Ministry building renovations must be prioritized

¶2. (C) The General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers provided an update on progress made to identify the many vacant ministry buildings in Baghdad that need refurbishment. Some ministries have money allocated in their 2007 budget to fix their buildings; others do not, and have made requests of the General Secretariat for funds. GEN Petraeus suggested that a list of the top 15 buildings needing renovation be created in order to track progress during subsequent sessions of the I-ESC. The PM concurred.

¶3. (C) Dr. Rubaie proposed that Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih be put in charge of this renovation project, but the General Secretariat indicated that the existing committee working this issue was sufficient. No specific decision on this proposal was voiced.

BPC suggests areas for better coordination

¶4. (C) Baghdad Provincial Council (BPC) Chairman Mueen al-Khademy provided an update of provincial government activities. The BPC stands ready to increase its role in supporting FAQ, and asked for greater cooperation between the BOC and the BPC Security Committee. The BPC Chairman stated that he still awaits a letter from General Aboud laying out a policy of coordination between the BOC, the BPC, and the security committees of the 15 district councils in Baghdad. General Aboud was not present.

¶5. (C) The BPC is directing local councils to survey the number of vacant houses in Baghdad, in order to provide more information on the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) crisis in Baghdad. The BPC is tracking nearly 35,000 IDP families in Baghdad, and offers the information it collects on the location and disposition of these families to the BOC.

Questions about provincial surveillance camera system

¶ 6. (C) The BPC Chairman said that a provincial camera surveillance system is becoming operational, but looks to expand in both range and capabilities. The BPC Chairman asked for MOI and MOD assistance in hiring more skilled operators for the command center. Currently, nearly 1000 (wireless and solar-powered cameras) have been contracted and they are starting to be installed across Baghdad. The BPC Chairman would like to see that number expanded in the city's hot districts, and at each of the major entry points into Baghdad.

¶ 7. (C) The PM and several other committee members raised questions about the location of the cameras, and voiced concerns of possible conflict with a plan by the Ministry of Communication to emplace a camera system in Baghdad. The PM stated that there must be better coordination between the BPC and the Ministry of Communication and the BOC on this issue; the Governor of Baghdad (not present) was expected to ensure this coordination occurred.

Baghdad Governor's reconciliation efforts reported

¶ 8. (C) The BPC Chairman said that provincial council efforts to build bridges with tribal leaders in the outlying suburbs of Baghdad are progressing. He reported on the Governor's recent trips to meet with tribal leaders and Coalition forces in Taji. He said that provincial reconciliation efforts are in an "experimental" phase and he hoped they would bear fruit in diminishing local support for al-Qaeda militias. He said that future efforts would focus on the outlying communities of Mada'in and Mahmoudiya. He said that tribal leaders expected financial support and asked for assistance. The PM

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stated that he fully supported activating these tribal relationships.

Dr. Chalabi helps IDPs

¶ 10. (C) Dr. Ahmed Chalabi stated that his office has been assisting IDP families in Abu Ghraib with registering with the Ministry of Displacement and Migration. He reported that some areas have seen a return of IDP families, notably Haifa Street (Karkh district), but other areas are seeing the displacement crisis deepen, like West Rasheed. Poor services are still a critical issue for many communities and Dr. Chalabi explained several instances of his attempts to coordinate improvements with various ministries.

Fardh al-Qanoon media plan described, and challenged

¶ 11. (C) FAQ Media Advisor Yassin provided a report of his committee's activities. While not possessing the assets or the authority that a government-controlled media ministry would have, Yassin claimed that the achievements of his committee have been significant. National Security Advisor Mufawak al-Rubaie appreciated the hard work that was being done, but stated that the committee should be doing less "hands-on" work (like handing out t-shirts and distributing booklets) and more high-level coordination work to ensure that the GOI's message is being presented across the many media outlets in Iraq and in the international press.

Energy problems exacerbated by Ministry of Finance

¶ 12. (C) GEN Petraeus stated that Baghdad could lose up to one-third of its potential power by the end of August if the

required diesel fuel for its generators coming on line was not delivered. The Ministry of Finance must release funds to Kuwait to pay for the fuel, he said. GEN Petraeus voiced his belief that the failure of the MoF to do this was "an embarrassment."

¶113. (C) The Minister of Oil voiced concerns about the upcoming vehicle ban and curfew for the 7th Imam celebration; he wanted to ensure that fuel trucks would still be permitted to make their deliveries despite the proposed three-day ban on vehicle traffic in the city. (Note: The ban is for part of the day and the longest period is one and one-half days. End Note.) He stated that 65% of all fuel used in Baghdad is for private electricity generation; preventing fuel deliveries would create massive problems for the city's residents. The MoO was invited to send a representative to the Crisis Cell to coordinate this issue.

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